

## **The Inviting School Survey–Revised (ISS-R): A Survey for Measuring the Invitational Qualities (I.Q.) of the Total School Climate**

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*This article describes the revised Inviting School Survey (ISS-R) which is a 50-item checklist based on the 100-item Inviting School Survey (Purkey & Schmidt, 1990, Purkey & Fuller, 1995). Both the original ISS and the ISS-R are designed for use by Grade Four students and above, teachers, school administrators and others associated with the school, such as counselors, psychologists, and social workers. The ISS-R, by being half the length of the original, is easier to administer as well as less time consuming, yet provides the same psychometric properties as the original.*

### **Description**

The Inviting School Survey (ISS) was originally designed to informally assess the Invitational Qualities (I.Q.) of the total school climate (Purkey & Novak, 1984; Purkey & Schmidt, 1987) and revised in 1990 (Purkey & Schmidt) to cover the five environmental areas as outlined in Invitational Education theory (Purkey & Novak, 1996, 1984): People, Places, Processes, Policies, and Programs:

#### ***People***

Although all parts of a school are vital to its operation, from the standpoint of the Invitational Model (Purkey & Novak, 1984),

*People* are the most important part. People create and maintain the invitational climate. It is important in a school to know how people who are significant in the lives of the students are contributing to or detracting from human existence and development. The invitational model requires unconditional respect for people. This respect is manifested in the caring and appropriate behaviors that people exhibit toward themselves and others, in the quality of life reflected in the places they create and inhabit, by the policies and programs they establish and support, and through the processes employed to sustain their organization and environment. In the Invitational Model, people come first.

### ***Places***

When seeking to change an environment, the most obvious place to begin is the physical setting. Any part of the physical plant that is unpleasant, unattractive, littered, grimy, dusty or dingy is disinviting. The ISS-R assists in identifying factors that can be altered, adjusted, or improved to create a more inviting physical place. Creating a pleasant physical environment is a major way that professionals demonstrate their concern for the people they seek to serve.

### ***Processes***

*Process* represents not only the content of what is offered, but also the context. The context of the Invitational Model is that life is never so busy that we have no time for caring, civility, politeness, and courtesy. Any school that operates under a situation where the processes are negative (lack of concern, rudeness, insults, etc.) is likely to achieve poor results in the areas of academics and human

development. Process is the factor that indicates how the school is operating, how the people are acting, rather than what is being done. Examples might be a democratic style of leadership, a cooperative spirit in the teaching/learning process, and interdisciplinary teaming among faculty.

### ***Policies***

The places people create are closely related to the policies they establish and maintain. *Policies* refer to guidelines, rules, procedures, codes, directives and so forth that regulate the ongoing functions of the school. It is not the policy itself as much as what the policy communicates that is vital to the Invitational Model (i.e., trust or distrust, respect or disrespect, optimism or pessimism, intentionality or unintentionality). Policies reveal the perceptual orientations of the policy-makers. The ISS-R is designed to help appraise the governance of schools, and point out areas where schools might move away from "rule fixation" to assisting all who are concerned with the operation of the school (students, parents, administrators, teachers and staff) in becoming responsible for their own behavior.

### ***Programs***

As in the other factors, *Programs* can be helpful or harmful to individuals and groups. Some programs are not inviting because they focus on narrow goals and neglect the wide scope of human concerns (for example, tracking or labeling students. People are not labels, and programs that label individuals as different can have negative effects). The ISS-R can assist in determining the inviting nature of school programs and in delineating programs

that should be altered in some way to enhance the personal and professional growth and development of all the people in schools.

Following recent research (Smith & Bernard, 2004; Shoffner & Vacc, 1999) and communication from a number of school administrators, teachers, and counselors it was decided to shorten the ISS in order to facilitate the use of such an instrument in schools. As such, the 100-item ISS has been reduced to 50-items with no significant reduction in psychometric properties (refer to Appendix B). Additionally, in order to enhance scoring and interpretation, retained negatively stated items were re-written to be positively stated.

The ISS-R consists of five subscales representing the degree to which schools are welcoming in the five environmental areas: 16 people items (e.g., “The principal involves students in the decision-making process”), 7 program items (e.g. “There is a wellness (health) program in this school”); 8 process items (e.g., “Grades are assigned by means of fair and comprehensive assessment of work and effort”); 7 policy items (e.g., “School buses rarely leave without waiting for students”); 12 place items (e.g., “The school grounds are clean and well-maintained”).

Placed together on a 50-item Likert-type scale, with items addressing each of the five factors of People, Places, Processes, Policies, and Programs, the Inviting School Survey (ISS-R) presents a global picture of life in school, inviting or disinviting. Individuals completing the ISS-R are asked to respond to 50 items on a five point Likert-type scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” (5) to “Strongly Disagree” (1).

## **Purpose**

The basic idea behind the ISS and the ISS-R is that everything counts in a student's education: from the overall physical facility to the way each individual child is treated in each individual classroom. The ISS-R yields five scores for the five factors and one composite (Total) score of all the questions combined (Details of subscale items are found in Appendix A). In addition to helping assess the “Invitational Quality” (I.Q.) of schools, the ISS-R can also assist school personnel in identifying weaknesses in the system that could be corrected.

The ISS-R is meant to be used in the following ways in a number of different ways:

- To identify schools which are eligible to receive the *Inviting Schools Award*, presented by the International Alliance for Invitational Education, centered at Kennesaw State University, Georgia.
- To identify areas of strength or weakness in a school's climate.
- To use as an assessment tool to see how administrators, teachers, pupils, parents, and the community perceive the school.
- To use as a pre-post measure by educators who are implementing a plan to improve or transform their total school.

## **Special Considerations for Institutionalized Usage of the ISS-R**

### ***The Inviting School Award***

As with the ISS, the ISS-R can be used as the basis for the *Inviting School Award* which is given by the International Alliance for Invitational Education. In the past the ISS has been a consensus report made by a representative group of three students, three parents, three teachers and the school's principal or headmaster. The score on this report is then compared with the norms that have been collected to see if the school is within the range of "invitingness" necessary to earn the award. Ideally, the group responsible for completing the checklist should be representative of the school's constituency.

However, in the past there has been no guarantee that schools followed directions regarding the selection of judges. Therefore, the scores on these checklists may be somewhat high. See Appendix C for the means of the schools that have submitted applications for the Inviting School Award and for the norms associated with the ISS as used for the *Inviting School Award*.

Information on how to apply for the *Inviting School Award* may be obtained from the International Alliance for Invitational Education Headquarters at Kennesaw State University, Georgia.

***An Assessment Instrument for Determining School Climate***

To use the ISS-R as an assessment of school climate the following steps should be followed:

- Ideally, every student, teacher, staff person, and administrators in the school should complete the ISS-R. However, practical considerations may require a representative sample group of the various groups.
- Each person completing the ISS-R is asked to do so without conferring with other students, members of the faculty, staff, or administration.
- Each person completing the ISS-R is asked to complete all items.
- The completed ISS-R answer sheet is then returned to the contact person responsible for administering the instrument.
- The answer sheets are then returned to Radford University Center for Invitational Education for scoring and analysis.
- Scores on the five subscales (the five P's) will indicate the climate of the school with respect to each factor, and, therefore, will indicate where change can be made for the school climate to be more inviting. For example, if the total score in the subscale area of *People* is low with respect to the norms, changes in the attitudes of people toward other people in the school might be necessary. In many cases, the scores on the five factors have indicated an overall need to do an in-depth study of the school climate.

### ***Administration and Scoring***

The ISS-R was designed for self-administration and may be given in individually or in groups. Although there are no time limits, most respondents complete the instrument within 20 minutes.

As the directions on the ISS-R indicate, participants should record their responses on the answer sheet provided. Most participants do not need prompting to complete the ISS-R. However, if a participant asks about skipping an item, he/she should be encouraged to respond to all items.

When administering the ISS-R to groups, the administrator should read the directions aloud while the participants read them silently. If questions arise during the testing session, the administrator's response should be supportive but noncommittal, for example, "Just give the answer that best describes how you generally feel."

The completed ISS-R answer sheets are returned to Radford University Center for Invitational Education, c/o College of Education & Human Development, Radford University, Radford, Virginia, 24142. Dr Paula Helen Stanley, Director, [pstanley@radford.edu](mailto:pstanley@radford.edu). A detailed report will be sent to the school. There is a nominal charge for this service.

### ***Current Research***

The five factors of People, Places Processes, Policies and Programs are the basis for the development of the ISS and the ISS-R, with *People* being the most critical single factor. People consist not only of the individuals interacting together on a daily basis to



operate a school. They work together in all aspects to fulfill the mission of the school. This mission includes policy-making, program development, long-range planning both in the areas of physical space usage (places) and usage of mental and emotional resources (curricula, counseling, policy concerning visitors, etc.). It also determines how all these different plans and policies will be implemented.

The ISS is a product of the Invitational Model developed by William W. Purkey and colleagues (Purkey, 1978; Purkey & Novak, 1984; Purkey & Schmidt, 1987, 1990; Purkey & Stanley, 1991). This model supports and encourages inviting practices in all areas of school functioning. The ultimate goal of the model and of the ISS (including the ISS-R) is to assist in the development of the individual student's potential in the intellectual, psychological, social, spiritual, and physical realms. An environment, which is both human and humane, is best for realizing this potential (Novak, 1992; Purkey & Schmidt, 1987).

The ISS was developed to determine which specific parts of schools could affect the total gestalt of the schools under examination. Observation, discussions, and surveys were used to collect information. The discussions were of critical importance to gain the insights of those people closest to the school situation. Such people included school officials and faculty (principals, counselors, and teachers), parents, students, and researchers. Over a number of years the aspects of schools that could impact the learning and personal growth environment were delineated. These were then formulated into behaviorally anchored questions that were intended to assess the invitational climate of the school. "Invitational climate" was the term used to describe the interrelationships of the five P's mentioned above.

In 2004, a detailed psychometric study of the ISS was undertaken by Smith and Bernard. One of the aims of the study was to determine whether the 100-item instrument could be shortened without compromising its psychometric properties. Utilizing Rasch measurement modeling (Rasch, 1980; Bond & Fox, 2001) the focus of the item analysis was to identify misfitting items in sequential calibrations, remove the identified item(s) and repeat the computations. The 'infit mean square statistic' was used as the criterion for uni-dimensionality and to investigate whether the subgroups of items "hang together" which is also a check of validity.

The results of this study and further analyses, such as factor and reliability analyses, have shown that reducing the present 100-item ISS to 50 items does not compromise its reliability significantly (See Appendix B).

While it is advisable to have an instrument in which all items are performing adequately previous research has show that the domain, Programs, is problematic (Shoffner & Vacc, 1999). That is, this particular domain may be subsumed under the other four domains. Smith and Bernard (2004) comment that few 'Programs' items have strong psychometric properties. It is suggested that more specific reliable items need to be written so as to have a comprehensive instrument to measure this specific subscale area.

In summary, a shorter version of the ISS lends itself to be used more often by school personnel to assess school culture as perceived by the major stakeholders: students, teachers, parents, and administrators.

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the psychometrics of the ISS-R it is suggested that further research be encouraged. Additionally, future psychometric studies of the Inviting School Survey need to examine the stability of the instrument across age, gender, country, and other school-environment demographics.

To obtain an extensive annotated bibliography of research studies on Invitational Theory and Practice, please contact the Radford University Center for Invitational Education, c/o College of Education & Human Development, Radford University, Radford, Virginia, 24142. Dr Paula Helen Stanley, Director, [pstanley@radford.edu](mailto:pstanley@radford.edu).

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Appendix A  
The Inviting School Survey - Revised (ISS-R)

**PEOPLE ITEMS**

- 3. The principal involves everyone in the decision-making process.
- 6. Teachers in this school show respect for students.
- 9. Teachers are easy to talk with.
- 12. Teachers take time to talk with students about students' out-of-class activities.
- 15. Teachers are generally prepared for class.
- 18. Teachers exhibit a sense of humor.
- 21. People in this school are polite to one another.
- 24. Teachers work to encourage students' self-confidence.
- 27. The principal treats people as though they are responsible.
- 30. Students work cooperatively with each other.
- 33. People in this school want to be here.
- 36. People in this school try to stop vandalism when they see it happening.
- 39. Teachers appear to enjoy life.
- 42. School pride is evident among students.
- 45. Teachers share out-of-class experiences with students.
- 48. Teachers spend time after school with those who need extra help.

**PROGRAM ITEMS**

- 2. Everyone is encouraged to participate in athletic (sports) programs.
- 10. There is a wellness (health) program in this school.
- 17. School programs involve out of school experience.
- 23. Good health practices are encouraged in this school.
- 31. Interruptions to classroom academic activities are kept to a minimum.
- 38. The school sponsors extracurricular activities apart from sports.
- 46. Mini courses are available to students.

**PROCESS ITEMS**

- 1. Students work cooperatively with one another.
- 7. Grades are assigned by means of fair and comprehensive assessment of work and effort.
- 14. All telephone calls to this school are answered promptly and politely.
- 22. Everyone arrives on time for school.
- 29. People often feel welcome when they enter the school.
- 35. Many people in this school are involved in making decisions.
- 43. Daily attendance by students and staff is high.
- 50. Classes get started quickly.

**POLICY ITEMS**

- 5. Teachers are willing to help students who have special problems.
- 11. Students have the opportunity to talk to one another during class activities.
- 19. School policy permits and encourages freedom of expression by everyone.
- 26. The messages and notes sent home are positive.

- 34. A high percentage of students pass in this school.
- 41. School buses rarely leave without waiting for students.
- 47. The grading practices in this school are fair.

**PLACE ITEMS**

- 4. Furniture is pleasant and comfortable.
- 8. The air smells fresh in this school.
- 13. The school grounds are clean and well-maintained.
- 16. The restrooms in this school are clean and properly maintained.
- 20. The principal's office is attractive.
- 25. Bulletin boards are attractive and up-to-date.
- 28. Space is available for student independent study.
- 32. Fire alarm instructions are well posted and seem reasonable.
- 37. Classrooms offer a variety of furniture arrangements.
- 40. Clocks and water fountains are in good repair.
- 44. There are comfortable chairs for visitors.
- 49. The lighting in this school is more than adequate.

Appendix B  
Validity and Reliability

The Inviting School Survey-Revised (ISS-R) Total Scale and Subscales provide operational measures of the five school environmental areas as outlined in Invitational Education theory – People, Programs, Processes, Policies, and Places.

While there is limited research on the *concurrent and predictive validity* of the ISS-R, *face and content* validity certainly exists. That is, the instrument's items represent and measure major school climate factors as judged by experts and practitioners in the field of invitational education.

The reliability (internal consistency) of the Inviting School Survey was evaluated by Chronbach's alpha coefficients and Guttman's split-half alpha coefficients using SPSS Version 13 (SPSS, 2004). Results of these analyses can be found Tables 1 and 2. As shown by these results the internal consistency of the ISS-R is reasonably good.

**Table 1**  
Inviting School Survey Chronbach's Coefficient Alphas for 100  
and 50 Item Bank

Number of Items	People	Program	Process	Policy	Place	Total
<b>100</b>	.81	.54	.68	.61	.71	.93
	30 items	10 items	20 items	20 items	20 items	100 items
<b>50</b>	.77	.48	.49	.52	.66	.88
	16 items	7 items	8 items	7 items	12 items	50 items

n = 469



**Table 2**  
Inviting School Survey Guttman's Split-Half Reliability Alphas  
for 100 and 50 Item Bank

Number of Items	People	Program	Process	Policy	Place	Total
<b>100</b>	.81	.53	.62	.54	.64	.90
30 items	10 items	20 items	20 items	20 items	100 items	
<b>50</b>	.75	.46	.57	.54	.65	.86
16 items	7 items	8 items	7 items	12 items	50 items	

$n = 469$

Bivariate correlational analyses were performed on the five subscales for the 100-item and the 50-item ISS. As can be determined by Table 3 all correlations were statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ).

**Table 3**  
**Correlation Matrix for Inviting School Survey Subscales**  
**for 100 and 50 Item Bank**

SubScale	People	Program	Process	Policy	Place
People	-----	.49***	.59***	.59***	.59***
Program	.55***	-----	.42***	.40***	.55***
Process	.76***	.51***	-----	.45***	.44***
Policy	.70***	.52***	.68***	-----	.51***
Place	.67***	.54***	.62***	.62***	-----

Note. Upper diagonal are correlations for 50-item ISS ( $n = 469$ ), Lower diagonal are correlations for 100-item ISS ( $n = 469$ ).

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Appendix C  
Inviting School Award Norms

**Table 4**  
**Inviting School Award Norms Prior to 1992**

Subscale	N	Mean
People	20	92.26%
Programs	18	90.88%
Processes	20	91.26%
Policies	17	93.26%
Places	21	90.38%

**Table 5**  
1992 Inviting School Award Norms

Subscale	N	Mean
People	6	90.86%
Programs	6	88.66%
Processes	7	90.42%
Policies	7	91.42%
Places	6	89.34%

**Table 6**  
Total Inviting School Award Norms

Subscale	N	Mean
People	26	91.94%
Programs	24	90.32%
Processes	27	91.04%
Policies	24	92.72%
Places	27	90.14%